

SPECIAL
BRUCE LEE
BIRTHDAY COMMEMORATIVE

BEHIND THE SCENES WITH BRUCE LEE

by George Tan

An Inside Look at "The Dragon's" Films

If you're a martial artist, chances are you've seen most or all of Bruce Lee's movies—more than once. Even though they are low-budget films, Lee's martial magic shines through like a torch.

Be it a big or a small movie, the process of making a film is the same: long, hard and boring hours that turn into weeks, months, and sometimes years. And Lee's movies were no exception. Many times, incidents occur on the set that are as interesting as the movie itself.

Following are a few anecdotes from Lee's films that may cause you to look at them differently the next time you pop one into your VCR.

The Big Boss

The funny thing about this film, which had the smallest budget of the Lee movies, was that it was almost never made. After Raymond Chow, head of Golden Harvest Studios, signed Bruce to a two-picture contract, Chow ran into one small problem: he couldn't think of a good script for Lee. The one suitable script, tentatively titled *The King of Boxers*, was too expensive for Golden Harvest to shoot.

Fortunately, a distributor from Thailand suggested they use a popular Thai folktale about a Chinese who defended his people. With a good script in hand, the crew, led by director Wu Chia Hsiang, headed for Thailand to the small village of Pak Chong.

Trouble arose during the first week of shooting when one of the extras grabbed Bruce's behind, which angered Lee.

"Bruce started yelling at the man," says Chan Long, a stunt man on three of Lee's movies.

Lee insisted that they throw the man off the set, so Wu fired the extra.

The man returned later with two friends and stood outside the gate of the ice factory where they were filming.

"I got very nervous" remembers assistant director Chang Chor. "I was told this man had just come out of jail. He was capable of shooting us."



Above, Bruce Lee kicks Liu Yung during a fight scene from *The Big Boss*. Yung was the only person to appear in all of Lee's films. Below, Lee, in a rare behind-the-scenes photo, gives a trim to *Big Boss* bad guy Han Yin Chieh.



Golden Harvest photos courtesy of George Tan





Bruce Lee took on a veritable army of opponents in a scene from *Fist of Fury*, above left. Above right, Lee shows Bob Baker how to add intensity to his performance. (Note the script is in Lee's hand.)



thing was wrong. So I went over to the set and saw that an extra was challenging Bruce. I had someone translate to the extra that to get to Bruce, he had to go through me first." The man quickly backed off.

Shooting the fight scenes wasn't easy. "I didn't know what to do," Baker says, "so Bruce told me to move like Wang Yu, since I had recently seen some of his movies. There is one part where Bruce is supposed to bite my leg, but I wasn't giving the right reaction, so he really chomped down. There was no need for another take after that."

Baker has a moment from the film that he carries with him at all times—literally. "Before I get killed off," Baker explains, "Bruce kicks me in the face. The plan was to show a close-up of my head getting kicked by Bruce's foot. Some people were to push me into his foot. Unfortunately, they pushed me too hard, and Bruce kicked with more force than he was supposed to. I got a couple of fractured teeth and a permanent impression of Bruce's heel on my cheek."

With nearly three times the budget of *The Big Boss*, *Fist of Fury* opened in Hong

Kong on March 22, 1972, and grossed nearly \$4.5 million in its initial run.

Way of the Dragon

Way of the Dragon was Lee's directorial debut. Like his first two movies, Lee was ever the trendsetter, putting *Way* into the Hong Kong movie history books for the following reasons:

- Lee was the first Chinese actor to start his own production company (Concorde).
- *Way* was the first Chinese film shot in Europe.
- Lee used double *nunchaku* on screen for the first time.
- Lee was the first Chinese to produce, star, write and direct his own film.
- *Way* had an all-foreigner villain cast.
- *Way* imported real karate champions from overseas (Chuck Norris and Bob Wall).

Making the movie was not easy, however. There were 65 different camera set-ups at the airport in Rome on the first day of shooting—about 50 more than normal—as Lee searched for the best photographic angles and lighting, and coached the actors.

Overall, however, the filming in Rome was done at a breakneck pace in order to save money. "We shot the exteriors in the Colosseum in about two hours," says the location manager Chaplin Chang. "We could not get a permit to film there, so we went to shoot at dawn, before the tourists came."

Lee was also denied a permit to film at the water fountains in Rome, but that didn't stop him.

"We found a security guard and asked him to let us film. He said it was all right as

But Lee took care of things. He went over to the man and told him everything was forgiven, and he could come back to work the next day. He never returned, however.

That problem was nothing compared to what happened next: they ran out of money! Director Wu was so enthusiastic that he overspent. It was only the quick thinking of Raymond Chow and partners Liang Fong and Liu Ling Hua that got the film back on its feet.

At this point, ace director Lo Wei, who had originally turned down the project, replaced Wu. Aside from picking up the pace, Lo made a major decision while changing the script. Instead of putting James Tien in the lead, he gave the spotlight to Lee. With renewed vitality, the crew of *The Big Boss* forged ahead to shoot the film on time and on budget.

The movie premiered October 31, 1971, in Hong Kong, and eventually broke every box-office record in the Orient at that time by grossing more than \$3 million in its four-week run.

Fist of Fury

The receipts from *The Big Boss* gave Golden Harvest more than enough money to film *The King of Boxers*, the movie it had originally wanted to do with Lee. Going under the new title of *Fist of Fury*, the cast and crew from *Boss* was brought back, with a few additions—the most noteworthy of which was Bob Baker, who studied with Bruce at James Lee's school in Oakland, California. Baker had the distinction of being the first *gwai-lo* (foreigner) to play a major part in a Hong Kong film.

"I went over to Hong Kong with Bruce, to act as his bodyguard," remembers Baker. "And since I was there, they decided to use me as the Russian villain Petrov."

Baker's bodyguard skills came into play only once. "I was in the studio when one of the stunt men came running over to me," Baker recalls. "He was gesturing that some-



At upper and lower left, Bruce Lee and Chuck Norris tangled in a now-famous fight scene in *Way of the Dragon*. Above, Lee and Norris work on the fight choreography.

long as we told him when we were going to start," Chang recalls. "When everything was set up, we told the guard we were ready. He thanked us for telling him, then took off! He didn't want to be around if we got caught."



In Game of Death, Bruce Lee switched to nunchaku (above) after Dan Inosanto kept snapping a reed Lee originally planned to use in their fight scene. At right, Lee hams it up for the camera during a lighter moment in the shooting of his final film.

The now-classic duel between Lee and Chuck Norris was actually shot at Golden Harvest Studios in Hong Kong. Photos were taken at the actual Colosseum from all angles, then used to make a mock-up in Hong Kong.

All throughout the filming, Lee was predicting *Way* would break the \$5-million mark, but the press kept taunting him that such figures were impossible.

On New Year's Day, 1973, the film opened to another record-breaking gross, and its total gross was nearly \$5.5 million.

Game of Death

The site: Narita Airport, Japan. An international martial arts fighter has just won the world championship and is on his way home when he is informed that his family has been kidnapped.

Does this sound familiar? Probably not, since it is the story for the original *Game of Death*, and was later scrapped.

Before his death, Lee had a pretty firm outline for *Game*, but at the time he shot the film's three fight scenes, everything was still sketchy. "Bruce didn't have anything definite," remembers Dan Inosanto, who appears in *Game*. "We'd get in and work on different things."

Originally, Lee was going to use a thin *bako* reed to fight a double-stick-wielding Inosanto. But the first time Lee came in, Inosanto snapped the reed in half. Lee fetched another reed, but once again, Inosanto broke it. Finally, Lee said "Let's use the nunchaku."

Ji Han Jae, the founder of *hapkido*, also filmed a fight scene with Lee, but asked that his name not appear in the film credits. This was due to the fact that Ji thought



of Lee as his student. Ji had first met Lee in 1969 through *tae kwon do* instructor Jhoon Rhee, and had begun showing Lee some of his techniques, which Bruce found very interesting. As chance would have it, Golden Harvest invited Ji to Hong Kong to film with kung fu star Angela Mao Ying. Lee was careful not to injure Ji's pride during their lengthy fight scene, and in the end, Bruce doesn't kill him.

The filming of the historic fight scene with professional basketball star Kareem Abdul-Jabbar was a hush-hush operation, even to the point of shooting late at night to keep the media away.

Lee died before *Game* was completed, and a double was substituted and filmed from clever camera angles to make it appear that it was Bruce.

Enter the Dragon

"Bruce Lee was literally humming" says

Enter the Dragon co-star John Saxon. "He seemed to be walking on air. I think he knew this film was going to be his breakthrough. I never saw a man so intense, or tense for that matter, about his craft.

"One day Bruce invited me to have lunch with Run Run Shaw, the movie mogul," Saxon continues. "And it was a class act: we were picked up in a Rolls Royce, and ate at a five-star restaurant. It was obvious that Shaw was kissing up to Bruce in the hope he would make a movie for him. So Bruce set his price at \$2 million. Run Run asked him where he came up with that figure, and Bruce replied 'If Marlon Brando can get \$2 million, then so can Bruce Lee!' I have to admit the guy had balls."

Just about everyone is familiar with the story of how Lee was cut by a bottle during a scene with Bob Wall, but what happened after that is just as interesting.

"Bruce was bleeding badly," remembers Chaplin Chang. "There was blood all over the backseat of the car. We rushed him to one hospital, but they had no facilities to treat so serious an injury. But they told us of another hospital, which was quite far. I could see that Bruce was getting nervous, and very angry. I told him to calm down, because he was bleeding even more when his temper rose. And he seemed to listen.

"On the way to this hospital, we had to take a narrow mountain road, and a truck in front of us decided to play games with us. Every time we would try to pass, he would cut us off. This went on for a while, and he finally let us through.

"As we passed him, Bruce rolled down

Continued



Bruce Lee battles the evil Han in the scene above from Enter the Dragon. At left, Lee performs a scissor takedown of Han (Shek Kin). After that scene, Shek Kin asked for a stunt double.

NINJA TRAINING VIDEO

Excerpts of
TEACHER'S
TRAINING SESSIONS

Run By
**Grandmaster
DR. MASAOKI
HATSUMI**

Filmed in **JAPAN**

For this
1 of a kind collector's video,
send money order for \$69.95,
payable to Soke Tapes

to
Soke Tapes
P.O. Box 1431
Wallingford, Connecticut 06492
U.S.A.

Limited supply - order now!
Running Time Approximately 1 Hour

his window and started swearing at the truck driver, all the while waving his bloody fist at the man. The guy almost had a heart attack when he saw it was Bruce Lee in full fury."

Enter the Dragon, or *Operation: Dragon* as it is better known in some places around the world, again proved that Lee's hunches were correct.

"Anyone who invested in Bruce's movies became a multimillionaire," says Roy McAree, the man responsible for marketing Lee's films worldwide.

"Bruce rolled down his window and started swearing at the truck driver. The guy almost had a heart attack when he saw it was Bruce Lee."

"A buyer in Greece bought *Enter the Dragon* for about \$20,000, and made a million back in its first year of release."

It's a shame that the "Dragon" himself wasn't present for his biggest moment of glory.

About the author: George Tan, who has done extensive research on the life of Bruce Lee, is a New York City-based author and owner of *Dragon Video*.



ROUND 1

These interval timers build stamina for: Kickboxing, Point-Fighting, Kali-Esgrima, or Wrestling. Timer does this by giving user selectable work/rest periods that repeat.

Used by: Kickboxing gyms in Spain, Canada, England, USA. Karate schools in USA. Colleges with wrestling in USA. Kali-Esgrima used by nationally known Kali-Esgrima-Philippine Martial Arts instructor.

- 1) Mini-Pro - 4.3, 2.1, 30, 15 w/60, 45, 30, 15, R \$89.95
- 2) Wristwatch - 3.2, 1, 30, 20, 15 w/60, 45, 30, 15, R \$89.95
- 3) Mini-Pro "Elite" - Keyboard programmable w/ speed intervals, and round counter. \$109.95
- 4) L/T Eye Ball - same as Elite but w/ A.C. W/bell and lights \$109.95

- (1-2) Battery powered 500 hours, w/ loud sounder, and buttons can be used w/ feet or gloved hands.
- (3-4) Keypad w/ back lit LCD display w/ loud sounder. #3 also battery powered.

ORDER NOW: MRL, P.O. Box 2771, Homewood, IL 60430
For faster service call: (708) 798-5415 Visa/MC/C.O.D.
Illinois residents add 7% sales tax - 5/11 please add \$4.95
1 year warranty - 30 day money back guarantee

Code No. 401
\$12.50

TAO OF JEET KUNE DO by Bruce Lee defines the fighting style Lee founded which earned him world-wide fame as a martial arts innovator. Timing, strategy, kicking, striking, grappling, mental attitude—all the aspects of Jeet Kune Do are richly detailed in Lee's own words and personal drawings. Size 8 1/2 x 11.

Please use order form on page 54

OHARA PUBLICATIONS, INC.
1813 Victory Place, P.O. Box 7728, Burbank, CA 91510-7728



JEET KUNE DO INSTRUCTION



by **PAUL VUNAK**

I am currently accelerating my I.P.T.P.'s (Intensive Personal Training programs). I am looking for the serious martial artist interested in the study of Jeet Kune Do concepts. My goal is to help perpetuate Bruce Lee's art by recruiting a handful of candidates to perhaps instruct someday.

Call 1-714-733-0575 for screening or appointment.

- Watch for Paul's new video release, "Attributes II: A Tribute to Bruce Lee"
- Keep an eye out for Mr. Vunak's new book... *The Empty Cup*
- For seminar information call 1-714-733-0575

Paul Vunak is one of a handful of full-instructors under Dan Inosanto teaching Jeet Kune Do concepts in the United States. Mr. Vunak is currently exclusively training the Navy Special Forces Units, and is available for private national seminars at special times throughout the year. His company, "Progressive Fighting Systems" is currently breaking new ground in personalized JKD training systems for the public...soon to be released. He can be reached in Virginia Beach, Virginia at (714) 733-0575.